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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001178

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BAGHDAD RESIDENTS EXPRESS EMERGING PESSIMISM OVER
BSP

REF: A. BAGHDAD 546 B. BAGHDAD 781

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Joseph Gregoire for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Baghdad residents from various parts of the city have expressed new pessimism over the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP) during conversations with PRToffs over the past week. Shia contacts from both east and west Baghdad have said that Jaysh Al-Mahdi (JAM) elements that previously fled the city to avoid arrests and confrontations with U.S. forces now appear to be coming back. Sunni contacts from west Baghdad expressed the belief that not enough U.S. forces have deployed in their areas and that they continue to be targeted by both Shia militias and Shia-dominated security forces. Several residents said they believe civil war will erupt upon a significant drawdown of U.S. troops. Initial high hopes for the BSP appear to be dropping as a result of a perceived increase in car bombings and sectarian murders. Much of the disappointment also likely stems from early unrealistic expectations of quick success. End summary.

Shia Residents: BSP Has Not Neutralized Sunni Threats

¶2. (C) Several Shia contacts asserted that the BSP has failed to neutralize threats posed by Sunni terrorists and insurgents. One Shia Provincial Council (PC) member who lives in Kadhamiya (north central Baghdad) said security conditions within her neighborhood have improved somewhat, but traveling to and from the neighborhood remains dangerous due to the spillover of insurgent violence from neighboring Adhamiya. She said she cannot visit relatives in Adhamiya, Dora, and Mansour due to security conditions.

¶3. (C) A Shia resident of Sadr City questioned the utility of the BSP when car bombs continue to kill Shia civilians daily and Shia families from the remaining Shia enclaves in west Baghdad continue to flee their homes. He said he believes JAM elements who left his area in February are coming back. When asked if he would welcome the presence of more U.S. troops in his neighborhood to bolster security, he replied, &Never. They only arrest us and bomb our homes. We prefer to protect ourselves.8

¶4. (C) A Shia resident of Baladiyat (a predominantly Shia neighborhood in east Baghdad, s 9 Nissan district) said the BSP is producing only limited results and U.S. credibility suffers with the failure of each new security plan. He commented that if BSP is the success that Iraqi and U.S. officials claim it is, Iraqi officials should start living outside the green zone and U.S. officials can stop moving in heavily armed convoys.

¶5. (C) A Shia resident of Jihad (a predominantly Sunni neighborhood in the southwest Rashid district) said JAM elements surround his neighborhood to protect remaining Shia families living in the area. He said there are regular clashes between JAM and Jaysh Omar (a Sunni militia) and that

he believes there are no U.S. forces in his area. When asked if he prefers to have U.S. forces or JAM elements providing security in his area, he replied, &Jaysh Al-Mahdi. U.S. forces will leave one day, and then what?8 He said he cannot go grocery shopping in his neighborhood because the markets are located on Sunni streets and added that he has a forged Sunni ID that he uses to pass through Sunni areas on his way to work.

¶6. (C) The same Shia resident of Jihad said he has seen what he thinks are Afghan and foreign Arab fighters squatting in homes vacated by Shia displaced families.

Sunni Residents Disappointed in Lack of U.S. Presence

¶7. (C) A Sunni resident of Mansour (west Baghdad) said security conditions have only improved slightly in his area because there are few U.S. patrols and Iraqi units only patrol the main streets. He added that additional Iraqi forces in the area would be unwelcome because he believes &they are all Badr Corp and Jaysh Al-Mehdi.8 He said the BSP is not producing the level of security expected because, in his view, U.S. forces are "carrying out random arrests of Sunnis, while allowing Shia militias to continue attacking Sunni civilians."

¶8. (C) Another Sunni resident of Mansour who works with the Iraqi government said he lives in constant fear of being targeted by Shia death squads for being Sunni, and by Sunni insurgents for working with the predominantly Shia government. He said, &What can I do? I am just waiting to die.8

BAGHDAD 00001178 002 OF 002

¶9. (C) The same Mansour resident said that insecurity has prevented the delivery of food rations to several neighborhoods in his district for months. He added that militants from a group calling itself &the Islamic State8 (al-dawla al-Islamiya) operate with impunity around Yarmouk hospital near his home.

¶10. (C) A Sunni resident of Abu Ghraib said her neighborhood is completely isolated because roads leading to and from the area are too dangerous to pass.

¶11. (C) A Sunni member of the Adhamiya District Council (DC) said he thinks the BSP is exacerbating sectarian tension in his district. He said the Iraqi Army personnel working in his area discourage people from crossing the canal (the west side of the canal is mainly Sunni and the east side is predominantly Shia) for security reasons. (Comment: Due to security concerns associated with crossing the canal, the DC has begun providing services to constituents from two separate buildings, one on each side of the canal. End comment).

Baghdad Residents: "What happens when you leave?"

¶12. (C) A large number of the Iraqi contacts said they believe that where the BSP has succeeded, the success has been because many insurgents and militiamen left the city or are laying low to avoid confrontations. Many of the contacts said they believe violence will spike again when U.S. troop levels decrease and these elements resume their activities in earnest.

¶13. A Sunni resident in the predominantly Shia neighborhood of Shaab (part of northern Baghdad, s Adhamiya district) said he and his family feel safer going out now than they used to, including on trips to the market that was attacked by dual suicide bombings March 29. He added that JAM activity in the area appears to have subsided in the past two months. However, while he feels safer generally, he said people in

his neighborhood remain worried that violence could erupt at any moment.

¶14. (C) When asked what they think will happen when there is a significant drawdown of U.S. troops in Iraq, two Iraqis replied in unison, &Civil war will erupt immediately.⁸ Their comments were echoed by several other PRT contacts.

Comment

¶15. (C) The comments by Iraqi contacts reflect a reduction in the cautious optimism that prevailed during the first few weeks of the BSP. Much of the disappointment likely stems from unrealistic expectations of quick success from an overwhelming U.S. troop presence throughout the city. Iraqi contacts repeatedly say they believe that U.S. troop increases may provide welcome short-term security, but add that long-term security depends on the development of professional, non-sectarian security forces and resolution of the political problems that cause violence.
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